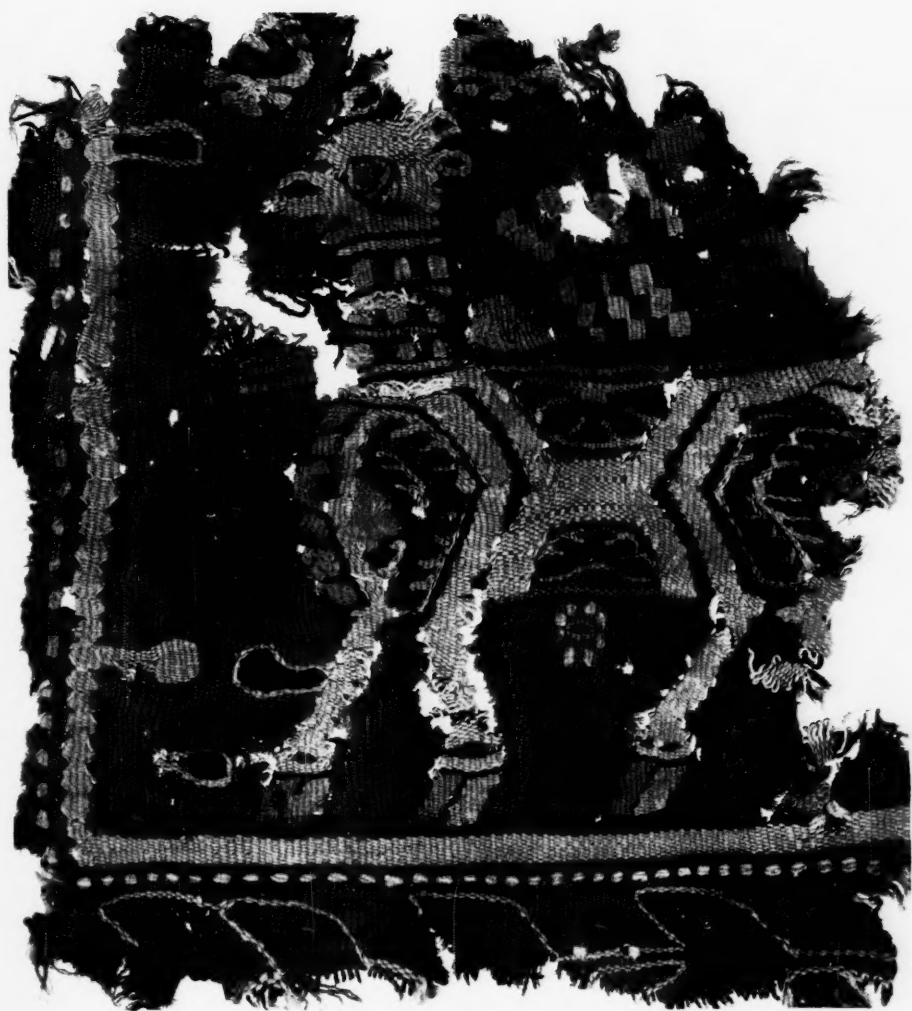


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LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM
*B*ulletin of the Art Division

VOLUME XI NUMBER 3 1959

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Cover: Tapestry. Sassanian design of ibex. Syria or Egypt. 6th or 7th century. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest A. Bryant, Jr. L.2100.A.59.60-31
Right: Tapestry in wool of dark brown and tan, on unbleached ground. Coptic, 3rd or 4th century. Costume Council purchase. L.2100.P.2.59-90

TEXTILES OF ANTIQUITY



Third
to Fifteenth Century

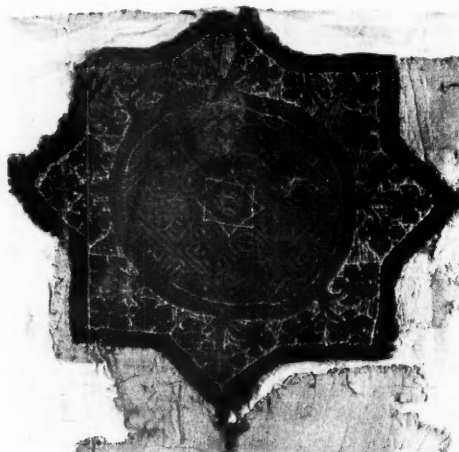
Woven works of art by the Egyptians, Persians,
Peruvians, and the peoples of the Mediterranean area



*Tapestry in dark and unbleached wool.
Coptic. Probably 4th century. Size 4½" x 12."
Anonymous donor. A.6862.56-24.*



*Tapestry in dark and light brown wool.
Hellenistic design. Coptic, 3rd or 4th century.
Size 4¾" x 7." Costume Council purchase.
L.2100.P.2.59-95.*



AGES before the dawn of history, when man began to fashion tools and weapons of stone, the craft of primitive weaving eventuated, about the same time with the invention of the skill of making pottery.

Finds in the ruins of ancient human habitation, and in burial sites, include the remnants of crude products of such proficiency developed during the Stone Age. Clay pots were discovered with the unmistakable imprint on their outer surface of some rough fabric which had evidently held the vessel in shape while it was still in a pliable state. The fabric itself could have been removed when the clay hardened, or burnt away when the pot was exposed to the heat of fire. Possibly, it may have been decomposed through the destructive forces of weather and age.

The earliest example of woven textures still preserved is in the British Museum, London. It came from the wrecks of prehistoric lake-dwellings in Switzerland.

*Left: Tapestry in black wool on unbleached linen. Coptic, about 3rd century. Overall size, 17½" x 11½". Costume Council purchase.
L.2100.P.2.59-97.*

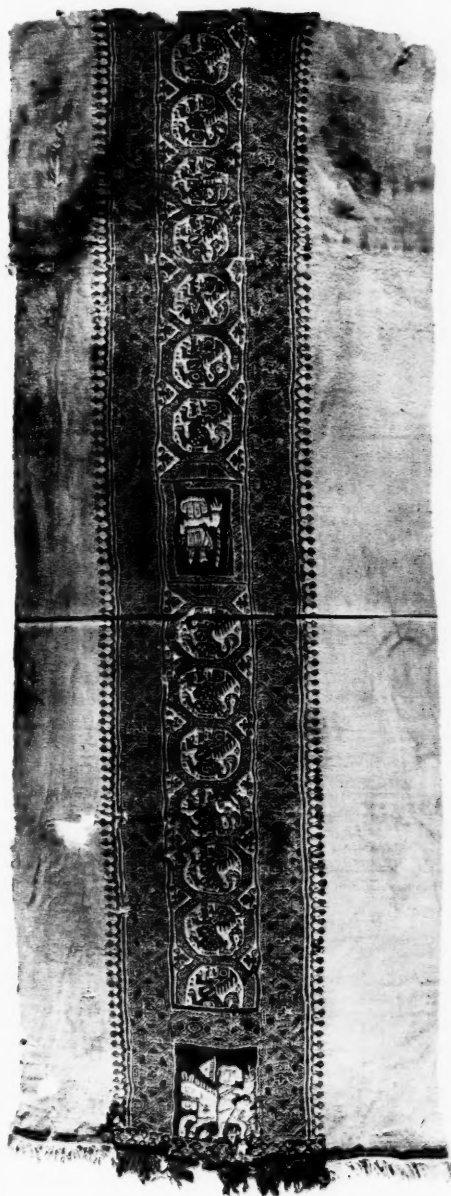
These were discovered and retrieved without much archæological effort. During the exceptionally severe droughts in 1854 and again in 1921 the receding waters exposed to view the remnants of huts originally built on posts erected in the lakes of many Central European territories. Investigations revealed the presence of a large variety of man-made, primitive objects such as implements, cooking vessels, ornaments, ropes, weapons of stone, bone and horn, and other articles of utility.

In the vicinity of Robenhausen, in Switzerland, in the bed of an ancient lake, dried-up ages ago, besides such pre-historic relics, *cloth* was found, made of some type of vegetable fiber; also spindle as used in spinning yarn.

The walls of the huts were often made of wattle, i.e. upright posts interlaced with flexible branches and twigs. This elementary method of construction may have been the forerunner of the art of basket-weaving, the origin of cloth weaving.

Other pre-historic textures were made of rushes, reeds, leaves and other vegetable matter, and strips cut from bast.

Many centuries went by until the emer-



Right: Tapestry in wool; black and beige on unbleached ground, with touches of red and green in the human figures. The geometrical design of the borders is augmented with stitches of beige color. The crosses in the border design indicate Christian influence. Coptic, 4th century. Size, 13"x 36." Costume Council purchase. L. 2100.P.2.59-89.



*Silk twill in gold-yellow, olive drab.
Coptic, 5-7th century. Size, 4 1/4" x 2."
County purchase. P.377.60-2.*

*Right: Tapestry in dark brown and
unbleached wool. Coptic, probably 4th
century. Size, 4" x 4." Anonymous donor.
A.6862.56-23.*

gence of weaving for other than purely utilitarian purposes, such as mats, baskets, loin-cloth, fishing nets and the like products.

According to Chinese chroniclers, silk weaving was practised in their country around 2500 B. C. This conjecture should be taken with reservation because the authentic history of China does not go back beyond 1000 B. C.

In the course of the 15th century B. C. tapestry-woven, colored and figured textiles were made in linen in the Nile Valley, three examples of which are in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. These were, as far as it is known today, the first surviving examples of attempts at artistic expression in the medium of woven fabrics.

About one thousand years B. C., Egypt, Syria, and other Eastern Mediterranean countries had regular weaving industries mentioned by Roman and Greek historians, and evidenced by murals and statuary which clearly show garments made of cloth, sometimes with ornamental hems; whether woven, painted or embroidered, we do not know.



In that part of the world flax had been cultivated, and sheep were bred. It is a logical conclusion, that those cloths were of linen, and wool.

Archæological researches established that regular export trade in silk tissues from China to Syria, and later to Rome, had taken place during the early part of the reign of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—220 A. D.). The very earliest known, colored, decorative silks came into existence in the first century B. C.

In the third century of the Christian era begins the period when admirable tapestry-woven, figured textiles were made by the Copts, the Egyptians of Christian faith. Their designs frequently show very strong Greek, and Greco-Roman influence, and their materials were linen yarn, and linen and wool. After the invasion of Egypt by Islamic conquerors in the seventh century the designs and weaving techniques had changed. This period, the Fatimid, introduced new motives, delicately drawn tiny animals, floral and geometrical designs; also silk yarn which made very fine weaves possible.

Meanwhile in Persia, whose art history extends over five milleniums, highly skilled weavers, under the patronage of

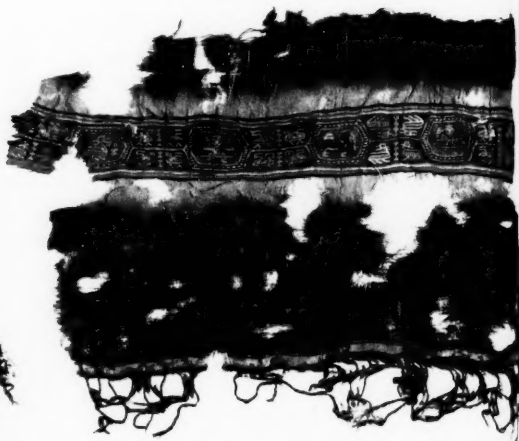


Tapestry in brown wool on undyed wool. Strong Greco-Roman influence. Coptic, 5th century. Size of roundel, 10½" x 10"; size of textile, 16½" x 14¾". Costume Council purchase. L.2100.P.2.59-37a.



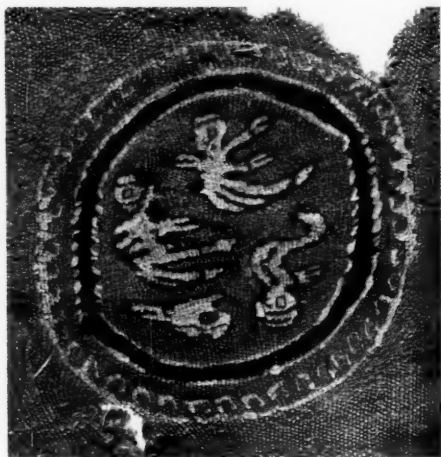
Right: Silk twill. Saffron-colored design on pale wine-colored ground. Egypt or Syria, 6th century. Diameter, 9" average. Balch bequest. L.2100.A.13.57-92.

Below: Tapestry in multicolored wool. Fragment. Design of a saint. Coptic, 6th or 7th century. Size, $3\frac{3}{4}$ " x 2." Costume Council purchase. L.2100.P.2.59-94.



Above: Band of multicolored tapestry in wool. on unbleached (now discolored) ground. Fayoum, 8-10th century. Size, 8" x 12." Partly perished. Anonymous donor. A.6862.56-28.

Below: Tapestry in wool; red and black design on unbleached ground. Coptic, 6th or 7th century. Size, 6" x 6." Anonymous donor. A.6862.56-25.





Left: Compound silk twill. Fragment. Tan & rose on beige ground. Palermo, Sicily, 13th century. Size, 9" x 4." County purchase. P.253.55-3.

Below: Tapestry. Linen & silk fragment. Design in red, black and pink, on pale (faded) blue ground. Fatimid. 10th to 12th centuries. Size, 10" x 3½." Balch bequest. L.2100.A.13.55-12.



Left: Tapestry in wool. Red and black design on unbleached ground. Coptic, 6th or 7th century. Size, 6½" x 6½." Anonymous donor. A.6862.56-26.



the Sassanian rulers (third to seventh centuries) produced remarkably distinguished and elaborately woven, polychrome, figured fabrics. Being nearer to China, the importation and use of silk yarn was of a much earlier date than in Egypt.

Persia was also overrun by Islamic armies in the seventh century, and, under Islamic influence, the patterns and techniques had undergone gradual changes. In the eleventh century, under the Seljuk dynasty, a most refreshing revival of the arts, including the art of weaving, had taken place, and, during the following three centuries, superb and, in many respects uniquely artistic weaves in amazingly perfected techniques were produced by Perisan master-weavers.

After a cultural relapse caused by the invasion and devastations of Mongolian hordes, the Safavid rulers (A. D. 1499-1736) resumed the effective support of designers and weaving craftsmen.



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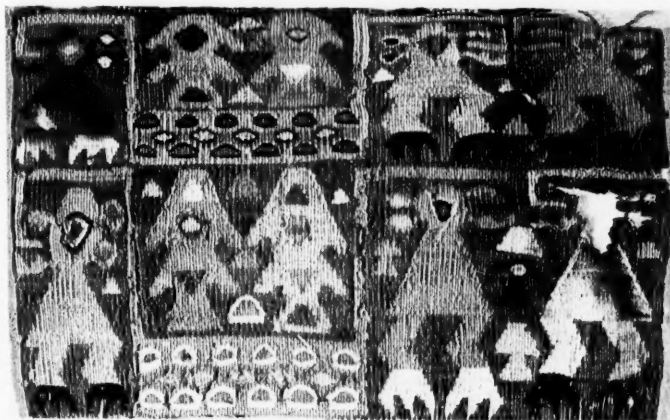
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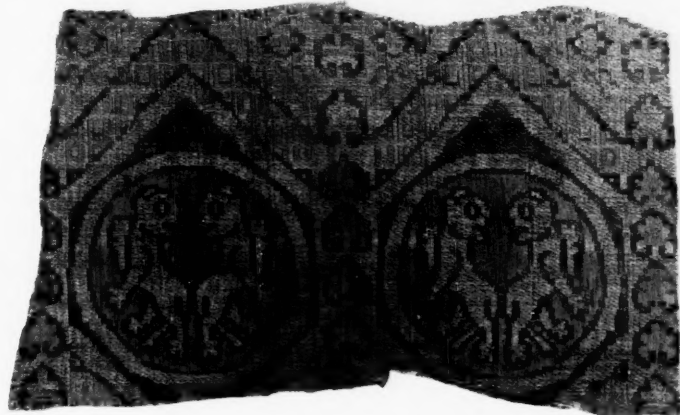
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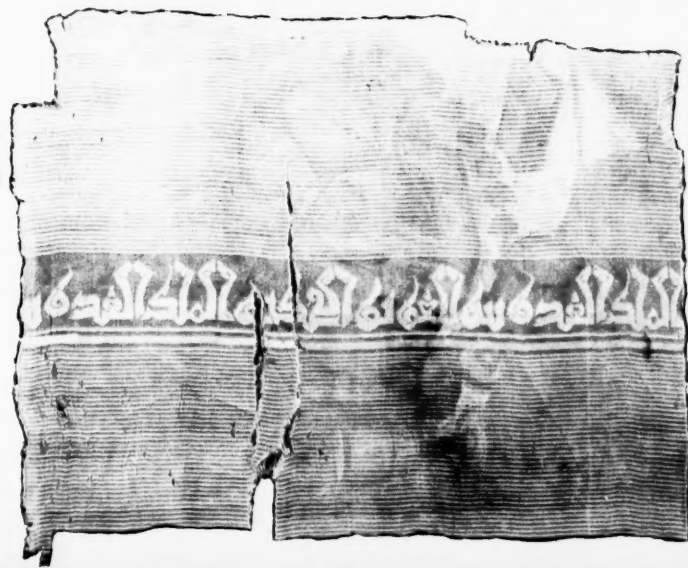
Left: Compound satin; reversible. Dark blue silk and linen, and gold thread. Lucca, Italy. (Some sources attribute this piece to Persia.) 14th century. Size, $3\frac{1}{2}$ " x 9." County purchase. P.253.55-6.



Right: Tapestry in wool. Stylized human figures described as "dancers," in olive green, olive yellow and black on red ground. Peru, probably late Chimu period. 6" x 10." Costume Council purchase. L.2100.P.2.59-88.



Left: Silk damask. Heraldic devices in gold-yellow, on blue ground. Italy, 15th century. Size, $19\frac{1}{2}$ " x 10." Balch bequest. L.2100.A.13.55-35.



Right: Fragment of Cope. Silk and metal weft; linen warp; twill weave. Belonged to Arnaldo de Biura, Abbot of San Cugat, Catalonia, Spain. (Some sources attribute this to Regensburg, Germany.) 13th century. County purchase. P.253.55-13.

Right: Silk damask. Light brown and beige stripes and inscription in Kufic characters (not deciphered). Persia, probably 12th century. Size, 10" x 13." Balch bequest. L.2100.A.13.55-72.

The products of the royal weaving establishments of Persia had found their way to the churches and palaces of Europe. Potentates of the western world, and their envoys were given presents of luxurious silken fabrics by the Kings, Caliphs and Shahs of Persia.

When Sicily fell into Islamic hands in the seventh century, the conquerors had brought with them their luxuriously decorative fabrics, dresses and hangings. By the tenth century superb stuffs were woven in Sicily, employing silk and gold thread. By the twelfth century several cities of highly civilized northern Italy had acquired the skill of making exquisite and artistic cloths.

In the eighth century the armed forces of the Moors, another Islamic people, had subjugated Spain, and brought with them the knowledge of weaving sumptuous materials. During the Moorish occupation, which lasted some five centuries, this knowledge produced a specific style in weaving, the Hispano-Moorish, of which many superb examples were preserved for posterity.

Meanwhile in Peru, whose early history is still obscure, the art of weaving had

Left: Compound cloth; fragment. Border. Brown, beige, red, blue and white. From the tomb of the Infante Don Felipe, at Villagarcia de Palencia. Hispano-Moorish, 13th century. Length, 12½", width tapering from 2" to 2½." County purchase. P.253.55-14.

Right: Detail of Shroud. Agave fiber with vicuna tapestry oblongs, about 3" x 2," containing primitive homunculus pattern. Peru, pre-Columbian. 12 ft. x 5 ft. Gift of Mrs. Reese H. Taylor. L.2100.A.27.55-2.

Left: Silk fragment. Brown design on beige ground. Probably Lucca, Italy, 14th century. Length, 32;" width varies from 3" to 5½." County purchase. P.253.55-7.



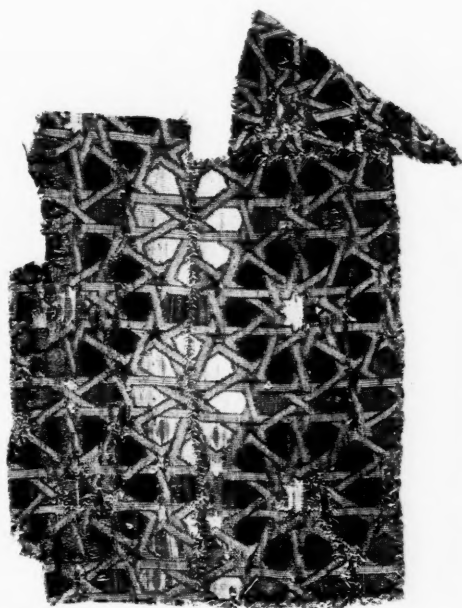
developed independently from that of the Old World. It is remarkable therefore that the ancient surviving examples of Peruvian weaving often show a technique resembling the Coptic tapestry-weave. The Tiahuanaco period and later cultures (Peruvian chronology is difficult to correlate with our reckoning) had produced highly interesting examples of artistic and technical accomplishments in stone, clay, and other media, including textiles. The latter present curiously simplified, primitive, and often grotesque representations of humans and animals.

Our Museum was fortunate in having been able to acquire in the course of the past few years, among many other precious antique textiles, a representative collection of excellent specimens of pre-Renaissance woven fabrics of historical and artistic significance, a selection of which are reproduced here.

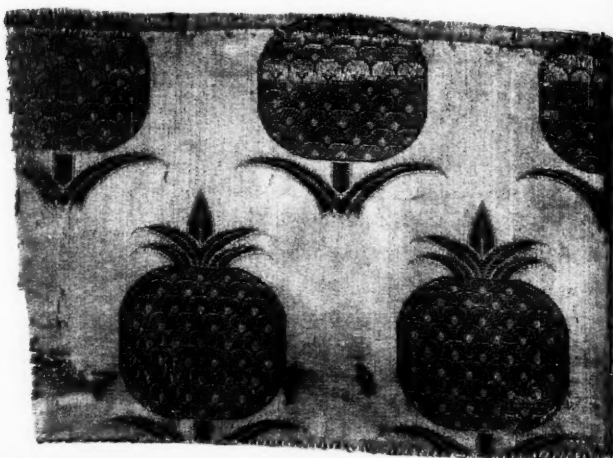
EUGENE I. HOLT

Above: Compound silk cloth. Yellow, green, blue and white, on wine-colored ground. Arabesque design (La Laceria). Granada. Hispano-Moorish, 14th or 15th century. Size, 9½" x 6." County purchase. P.253.55-15.

Right: Compound satin; fragment. Green, yellow, blue and white, on crimson ground. Coat of arms of Granada. Arabic inscription. Hispano-Moorish, 15th century. Size, 10" x 6," irregular. County purchase. P.253.55-18.



*Figured satin.
Gold-colored and green
design on salmon-colored
ground. Spain, 15th
century. Size, 6½" x 9½."
County purchase.
P.253.55-16.*



*Compound satin;
fragment. The foliage
and other details are
brown and yellow with
metallic gold. The rest
is blue, green and white.
Crimson ground. Coat
of arms of Granada.
The inscription in the
shield reads, "Glory
to our Sultan."
Hispano-Moorish,
c. 1480. Size, 8" x 8,"
irregular. County
purchase.
P.253.55-19.*

The textiles illustrated in this *Bulletin* will be included in an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum July 26 through October 30, 1960

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Four Abstract Classicists, Loan exhibition of four California painters. September 16 to October 18, 1959. (72 pages, all works illustrated, 4 plates in color.) \$1.92

Woven Treasures of Persian Art, Loan exhibition. April 1 to May 23, 1959. (70 pages, freely illustrated.) \$2.40

California Water Color Society, 38th National exhibition. November 12 to December 9, 1958. (24 pages, illustrated.) 96c

Irving Gill, Photographs of his architecture. October 1 to 26, 1958. (60 pages freely illustrated.) \$1

1958 *Annual Exhibition, Artists of Los Angeles & Vicinity*. Oil paintings, water colors, graphic arts and sculpture. (36 pages, illustrated, directory of artists.) 75c

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Prints by Lovis Corinth. Loan exhibition from the Mr. & Mrs. Sigbert H. Marcy Collection. March 9 to April 8, 1956. (28 pages, illustrated.) 50c

Stanton MacDonald-Wright. Retrospective exhibition of paintings. January 19 to February 19, 1956. (28 pages, freely illustrated.) \$1.50

Art of the Weaver. Loan exhibition of textiles. October 8, 1954 to January 2, 1955. (24 pages, illustrated.) 50c

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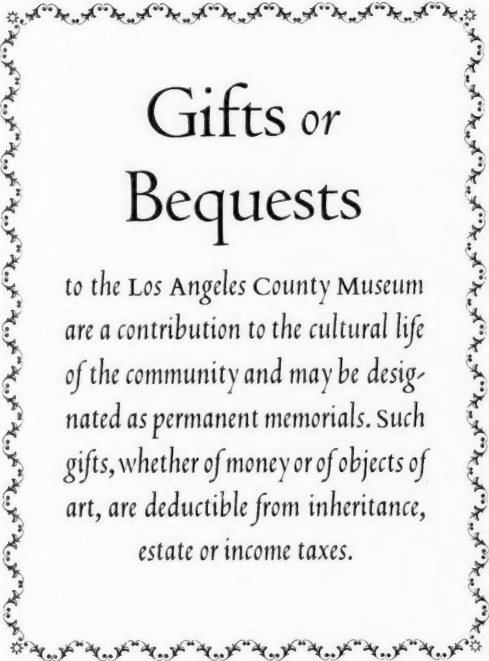
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